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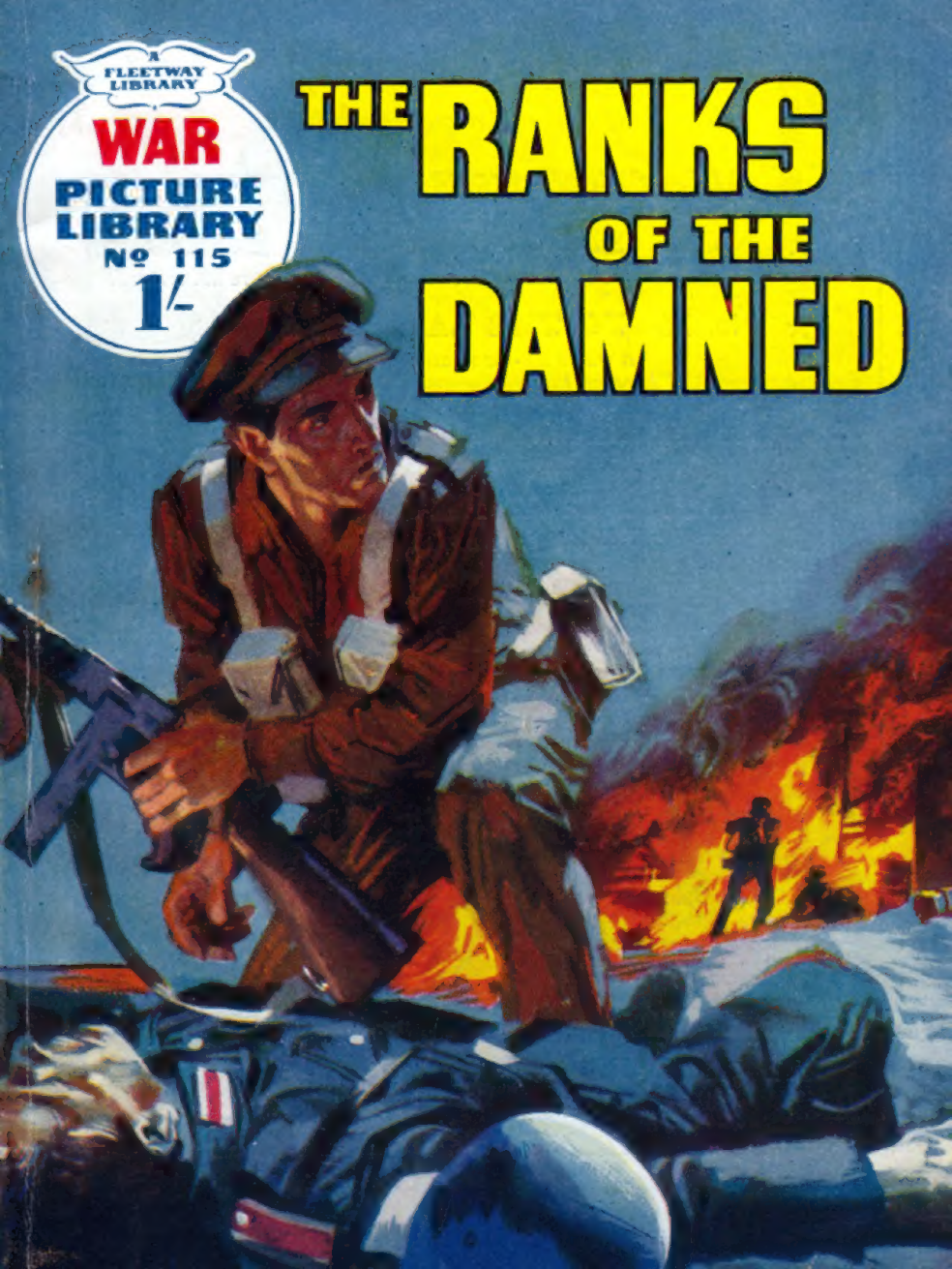

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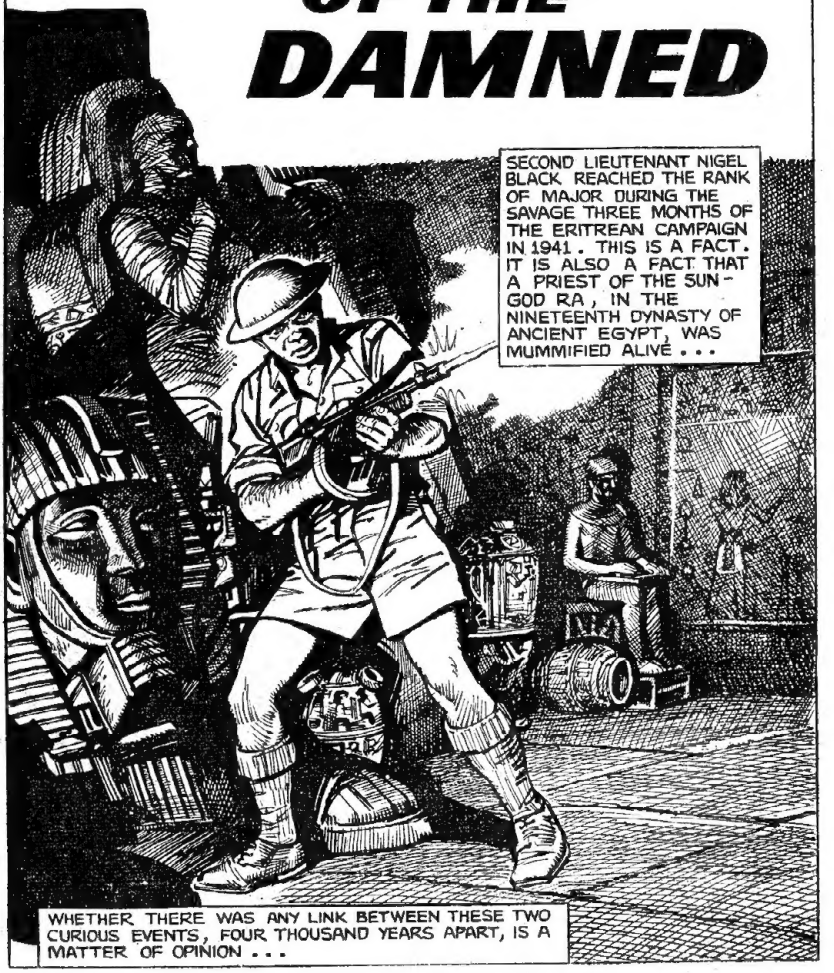

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Chapter 1. THE MUMMY

THE PHARAOH MADE SINIS HIGH PRIEST IN CEPHREN'S PLACE. A YEAR LATER, AT A PALACE BANQUET, THE PHARAOH'S VIZIER WAS STABBED BY AN UNKNOWN HAND...
OSIRIS BE MERCIFUL ...THERE IS A MURDERER AMONG US...

SOME MEN SUSPECTED SINIS OF COMPLICITY IN THE VIZIER'S MURDER, AMONG THEM AAHMES, THE PHARAOH'S ELDEST SON. THEN AAHMES WAS STRANGLED IN A MEMPHIS ALLEYWAY...
UGGGH...

WHEN THE MUMMY OF THE MURDERED PRINCE WAS SEALED IN ITS ROYAL TOMB, IT WAS SINIS WHO COMFORTED THE PHARAOH WITH SMOOTH WORDS . . .
ALAS . . . MY SON . . . MY SON . . .
LET THE PHARAOH KNOW THAT HE IS NOT ALONE IN HIS GRIEF . . . HIS FAITHFUL SERVANT SINIS IS BESIDE HIM . . .

THE ONCE-OBSCURE PRIEST WAS NOW THE SECOND MOST POWERFUL MAN IN EGYPT. WHEN PHARAOH WENT TO VIEW THE PROGRESS OF HIS OWN MAGNIFICENT TOMB AT GIZA, SINIS WENT WITH HIM . . .
MIGHTY WILL BE THE NAME OF SENRUSET WHEN POSTERITY LOOKS UPON THIS PYRAMID, HIS MONUMENT!
TRULY, SINIS . . . YET WHILE HE LIVES, THE PHARAOH WILL LEAN ON YOUR ARM . . .

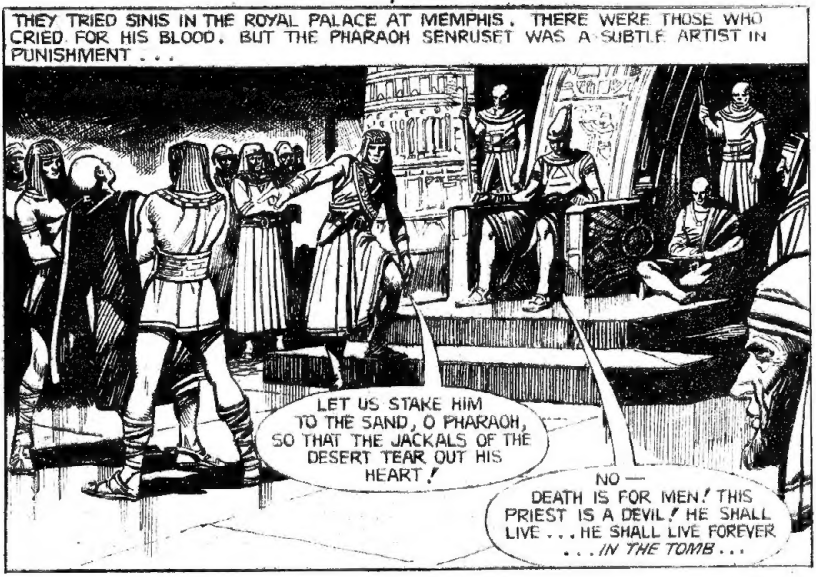
BUT THERE WERE STILL MEN WHO REMEMBERED THE THREE CONVENIENT MURDERS WHICH HAD GIVEN THE AMBITIOUS PRIEST SUCH POWER . . .
ATTEND ME, SINIS . . . I WILL SHOW YOU THE SECRET CHAMBER WHERE MY BODY SHALL REST AFTER MY DEATH.
THE PHARAOH HONOURS HIS SERVANT.
HE SMILES, THIS MAN OF THE SMOOTH TONGUE . . . YET HIS EYES ARE COLD.

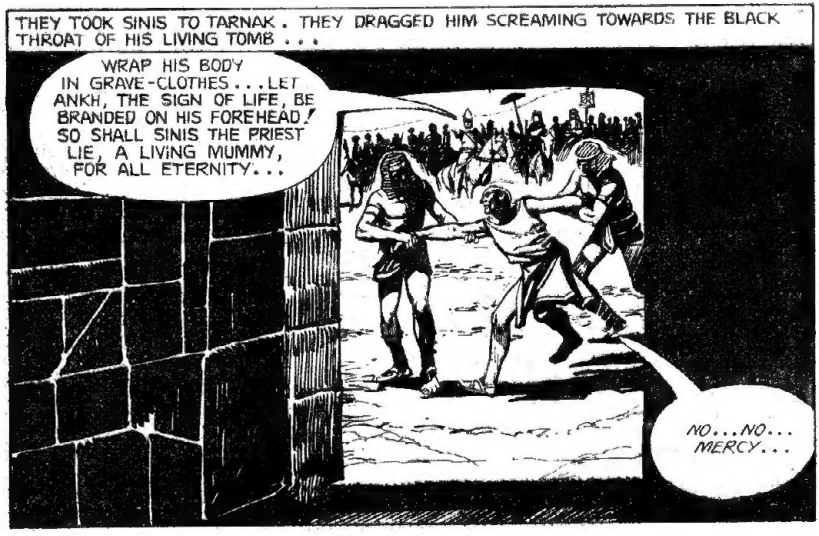
IN THE BLACK DEPTHS OF THE PYRAMID, THE PHARAOH AND THE PRIEST STOOD ALONE ABOVE THE YAWNING SHAFT OF THE SECRET SEPULCHRE . . .
HERE SHALL MY BODY LIE UNTO ALL ETERNITY! OH, AAHMES, MY SON, WHO HAS GONE BEFORE ME, I AM READY TO DIE . . .

IN THAT MOMENT, THE PRIEST WAS SEIZED WITH A MONSTROUS AMBITION.
I, SINIS, SHALL RULE OVER EGYPT . . . IT IS MY DESTINY . . . AND BUT ONE OLD MAN STANDS IN MY WAY!

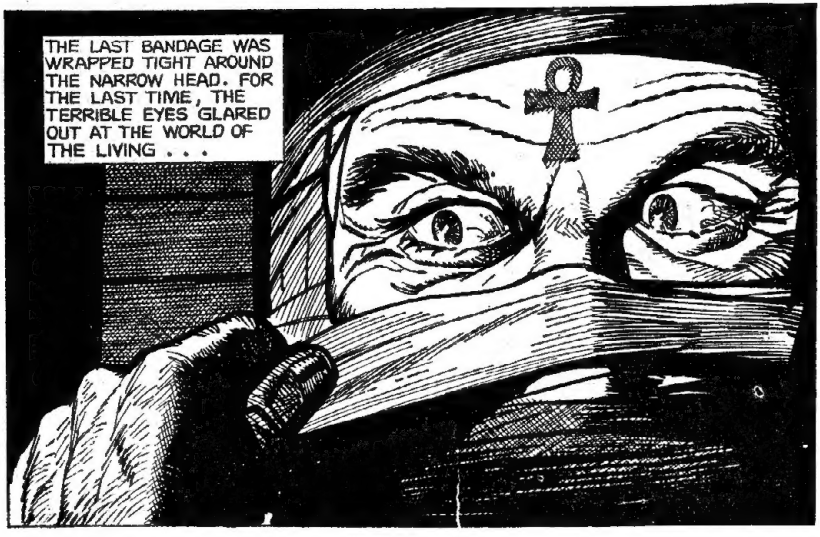
EYES BLAZING, THE PRIEST SLID VENOMOUSLY FORWARD . . .
DIE THEN, PHARAOH! DIE AS CEPHREN DIED – AND THE VIZIER – AND AAHMES YOUR SON, THAT I SINIS SHALL BE MIGHTY ABOVE OTHER MEN! DIE . . . DIE . . .

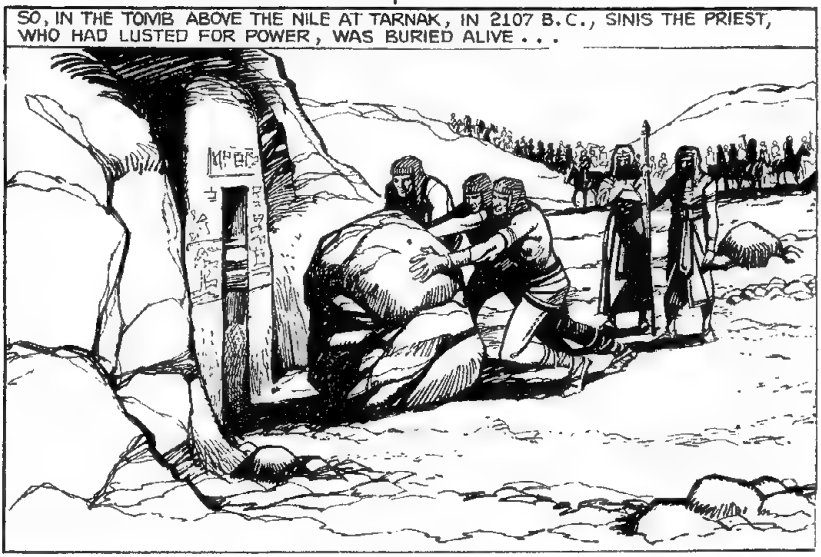
THE MURDEROUS HANDS OF SINIS WERE SIX INCHES FROM THEIR VICTIM WHEN THE COMMANDER OF THE PHARAOH'S BODYGUARD LUNGED OUT OF THE SHADOWS.
RA BE PRAISED . . . WHO PROTECTS ME FROM SUCH FOUL TREACHERY . . .
AAAGH . .

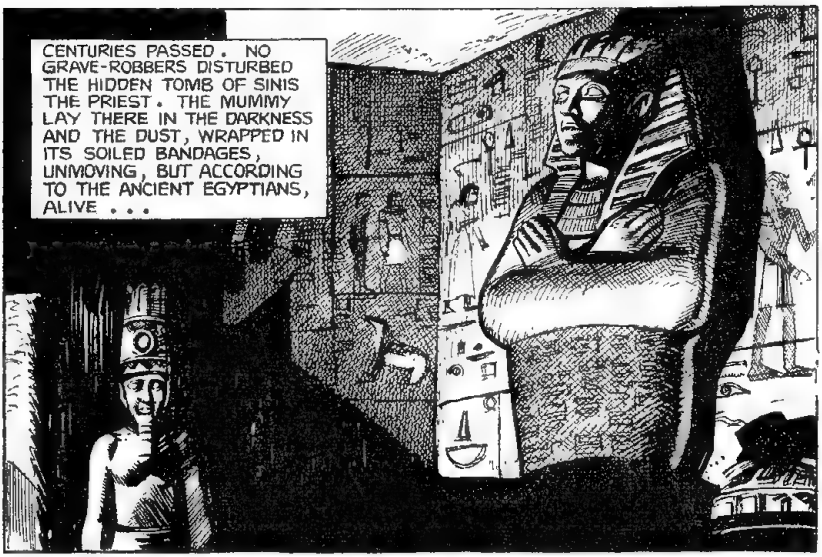

THEY TRIED SINIS IN THE ROYAL PALACE AT MEMPHIS. THERE WERE THOSE WHO CRIED FOR HIS BLOOD. BUT THE PHARAOH SENRUSET WAS A SUBTLE ARTIST IN PUNISHMENT . . .
LET US STAKE HIM TO THE SAND, O PHARAOH, SO THAT THE JACKALS OF THE DESERT TEAR OUT HIS HEART!
NO— DEATH IS FOR MEN! THIS PRIEST IS A DEVIL! HE SHALL LIVE . . . HE SHALL LIVE FOREVER . . . IN THE TOMB . . .


THEY TOOK SINIS TO TARNAK. THEY DRAGGED HIM SCREAMING TOWARDS THE BLACK THROAT OF HIS LIVING TOMB . . .
WRAP HIS BODY IN GRAVE-CLOTHES . . . LET ANKH, THE SIGN OF LIFE, BE BRANDED ON HIS FOREHEAD! SO SHALL SINIS THE PRIEST LIE, A LIVING MUMMY, FOR ALL ETERNITY . . .
NO . . . NO . . . MERCY . . .

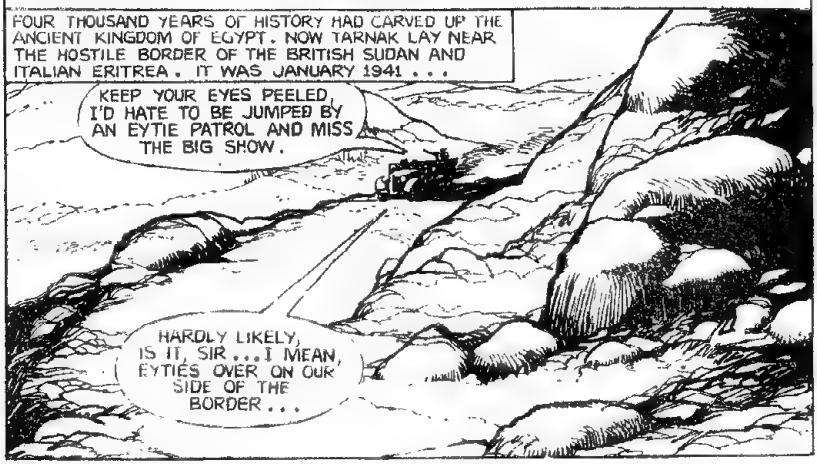
WHEN HIS FRENZIED BODY HAD BEEN STRAPPED IN THE COARSE, LINEN BANDAGES OF THE GRAVE, THE SIGN OF LIFE WAS BRANDED INTO THE PRIEST'S FOREHEAD . . .
AAAHH . . .
LIVE FOREVER, SINIS . . . IN THE PRISON OF THE DEAD . . .


THE LAST BANDAGE WAS WRAPPED TIGHT AROUND THE NARROW HEAD. FOR THE LAST TIME, THE TERRIBLE EYES GLARED OUT AT THE WORLD OF THE LIVING . . .

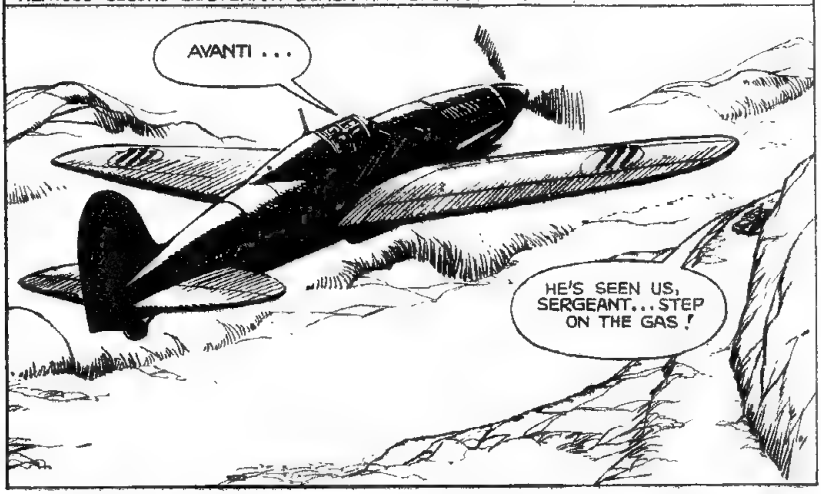

SO, IN THE TOMB ABOVE THE NILE AT TARNAK, IN 2107 B.C., SINIS THE PRIEST, WHO HAD LUSTED FOR POWER, WAS BURIED ALIVE . . .


CENTURIES PASSED. NO GRAVE-ROBBERS DISTURBED THE HIDDEN TOMB OF SINIS THE PRIEST. THE MUMMY LAY THERE IN THE DARKNESS AND THE DUST, WRAPPED IN ITS SOILED BANDAGES, UNMOVING, BUT ACCORDING TO THE ANCIENT EGYPTIANS, ALIVE . . .

Chapter 2. A MAN POSSESSED



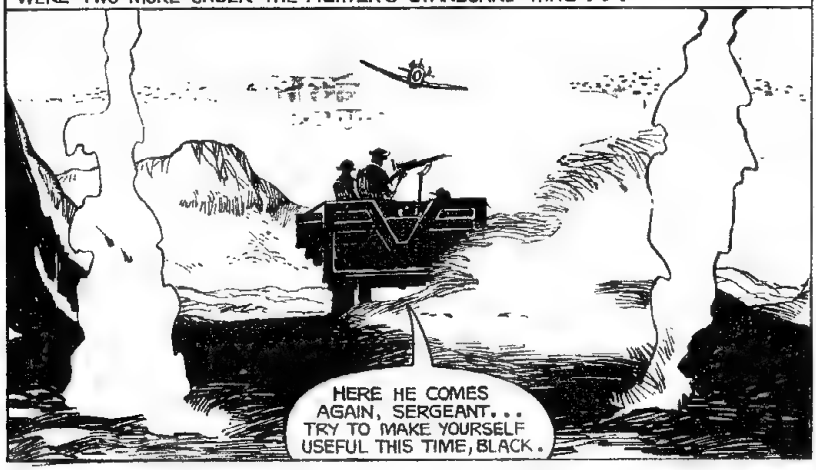
THE UNITS WHICH GARRISONED MUSSOLINI'S EAST AFRICAN EMPIRE IN 1941 WERE SUPPORTED BY AN EFFICIENT AIR ARM. IT WAS A MACCHI 202 FIGHTER WHICH THE NERVOUS SECOND LIEUTENANT BLACK HAD SPOTTED . . .



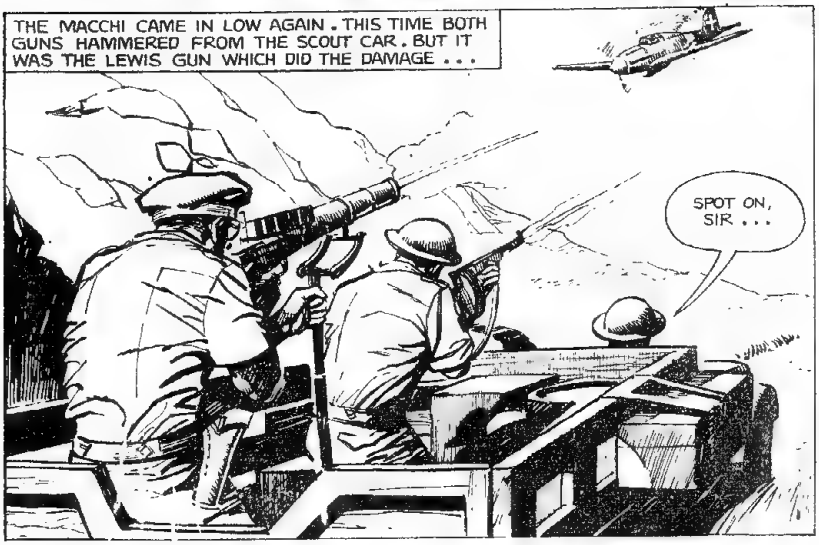
LIEUTENANT COTTRELL FLUNG A TOMMY GUN AT THE PALE SECOND LIEUTENANT AS HE SCRAMBLED INTO THE BACK OF THE TRUCK . . .

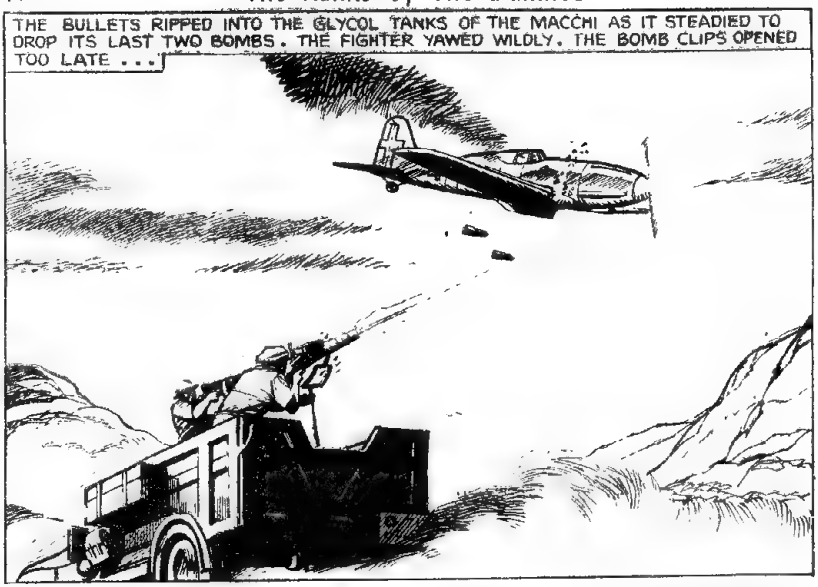
THE LEWIS GUN STUTTERED WRATHFULLY. COTTRELL, AN ARCHAEOLOGIST IN THE CAIRO MUSEUM BEFORE THE WAR, HAD SHARP EYES AND A PURPOSEFUL HAND. BUT NIGEL BLACK'S GUN WAS SILENT...

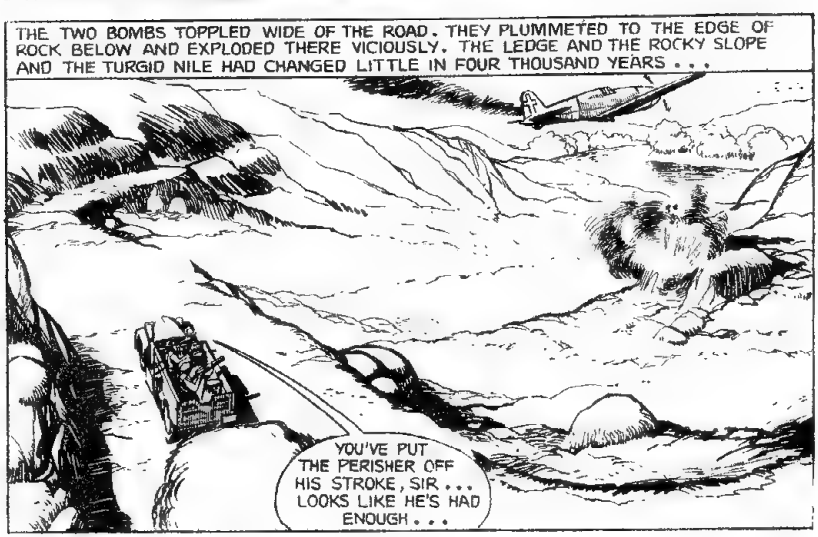
THE MACCHI WAS FITTED WITH FOUR SMALL 120 LB. BOMBS. TWO OF THEM HAD BLOWN NEAT BUT HARMLESS DENTS IN THE TARNAK-MEMPHIS ROAD. THERE WERE TWO MORE UNDER THE FIGHTER'S STARBOARD WING...



NERVOUS TENSION CRAMPED NIGEL BLACK'S THIN FINGERS ON THE TRIGGER. SERGEANT VENN HEARD THE AGONISED WHISPER BEHIND HIM...
I'VE GOT TO... THIS TIME I'VE GOT TO...
HECK... I THOUGHT OLD MAN MUNRO HAND-PICKED HIS OFFICERS...


THE MACCHI CAME IN LOW AGAIN. THIS TIME BOTH GUNS HAMMERED FROM THE SCOUT CAR. BUT IT WAS THE LEWIS GUN WHICH DID THE DAMAGE...
SPOT ON, SIR...


THE BULLETS RIPPED INTO THE GLYCOL TANKS OF THE MACCHI AS IT STEADIED TO DROP ITS LAST TWO BOMBS. THE FIGHTER YAWED WILDLY. THE BOMB CLIPS OPENED TOO LATE . . .


THE TWO BOMBS TOPPLED WIDE OF THE ROAD. THEY PLUMMETED TO THE EDGE OF ROCK BELOW AND EXPLODED THERE VICIOUSLY. THE LEDGE AND THE ROCKY SLOPE AND THE TURGID NILE HAD CHANGED LITTLE IN FOUR THOUSAND YEARS . . .
YOU'VE PUT THE PERISHER OFF HIS STROKE, SIR . . . LOOKS LIKE HE'S HAD ENOUGH . . .

SERGEANT VENN WATCHED THE DAMAGED MACCHI. NIGEL BLACK LOOKED AT HIS HANDS. IT WAS THE LIEUTENANT WHO NOTICED THE CURIOUS EFFECT OF THE EXPLOSIONS ON THE LEDGE . . .
IF THERE *ARE* EYTIE PATROLS ABOUT, SIR, WE'RE GOING TO HEAR FROM THEM AS SOON AS THAT PILOT GETS CRACKING ON HIS TRANSMITTER.
YES . . . I DARESAY, SERGEANT. . . ODD SORT OF CRATER THOSE BOMBS HAVE MADE DOWN THERE.

A FEW POUNDS OF NITRO-GLYCERINE HAD BLOWN ASIDE THE STONY DEBRIS OF FORTY CENTURIES. THE TOMB OF SINIS THE PRIEST LAY OPEN TO THE LIGHT OF DAY . . .
SERGEANT, *LOOK!* THAT'S NOT JUST A CRATER . . . IT'S A TOMB. THE BOMBS HAVE OPENED IT UP. STOP THE CAR . . .
ANYTHING YOU SAY, SIR . . .

NIGEL BLACK'S MOUTH TWITCHED NERVOUSLY...
YOU'RE NOT LEAVING ME ALONE, ARE YOU? WHAT HAPPENS IF ANY ITALIANS TURN UP?
PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER, BLACK! IF YOU SEE ANYTHING SUSPICIOUS, FIRE A BURST ON THE LEWIS AND WE'LL COME BACK TO GIVE YOU A HAND. COME ON, SERGEANT.

TO LIEUTENANT COTTRELL, THE PAST WAS A LIVING THING OF INFINITE INTEREST.
MISTER BLACK, SIR... HE HANDLES A GUN AS IF HE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT IT WAS FOR.
AT THE MOMENT, SERGEANT, I'M MORE CONCERNED WITH THAT TOMB DOWN THERE... AND WHATEVER'S IN IT.

FOUR THOUSAND YEARS AGO, THE PRIESTS OF THE PHARAOH SENRUSET HAD SEALED THE DOOR OF THIS TOMB ON A LIVING MUMMY. FORTY CENTURIES HAD PASSED. NOW THE TOMB WAS OPEN AGAIN . . .
KEEP YOUR FINGERS CROSSED, SERGEANT... I'M GOING IN.

THE MUMMY OF SINIS THE PRIEST STILL LAY THERE IN THE DUST, WRAPPED IN ITS SOILED BANDAGES, UNMOVING, BUT ACCORDING TO THE ANCIENT EGYPTIANS, ALIVE . . .

STIFF-LEGGED, THE TWO ENGLISHMEN WALKED DEEPER INTO THE TOMB. THEY STARED AT THE BANDAGED FIGURE . . .
UNTOUCHED . . . JUST AS THEY LEFT HIM A FEW THOUSAND YEARS AGO . . . THINK OF THAT, SERGEANT.
I AM THINKING OF IT, SIR . . . GIVES YOU THE CREEPS, DOESN'T IT?

SERGEANT VENN STIRRED UNEASILY. THE AIR IN THE TOMB WAS HOT, OPPRESSIVE . . . HE FOR ONE HAD SEEN ENOUGH . . .
I SAY, AN INSCRIPTION, TOO . . . COPTIC, BY THE LOOK OF IT . . . WHERE'S MY NOTEBOOK?
IF YOU DON'T WANT ME ANY MORE, SIR, I'LL TAKE A LOOK AROUND OUTSIDE . . .

FROM THE ROAD ABOVE, NIGEL BLACK SAW THE SERGEANT COME OUT ALONE FROM THE TOMB. THE YOUNG OFFICER WAS SWEATING MISERABLY . . .
WHAT THE BLAZES ARE THEY DOING DOWN THERE? WHY DON'T THEY COME BACK?

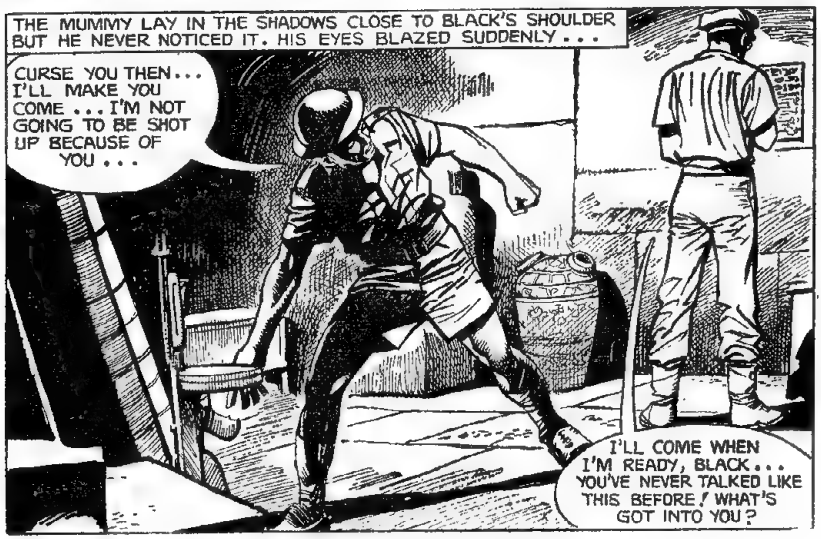
SERGEANT VENN HAD DISAPPEARED WHEN A HANDFUL OF STONES DRIBBLED DOWN FROM THE SLOPE ABOVE. BLACK CRIED OUT ALOUD . . .
NO... ITALIANS... OH NO...

YOUNG AND INEXPERIENCED, HE WAS FRANTIC WITH FEAR. THERE WERE NO SHOTS BEHIND HIM, BUT HE RAN . . .
LIEUTENANT! THEY'RE HERE . . . THE ITALIANS . . .

THE TOMB WAS DARK AFTER THE SUNLIGHT. BLACK GLIMPSED THE LIEUTENANT AT THE FAR WALL, SCRIBBLING IN A NOTEBOOK . . .
LIEUTENANT . . . THE ITALIANS ARE COMING OVER THE RIDGE . . .
HANG ON, BLACK . . . SHAN'T BE LONG NOW. THIS IS FASCINATING .

THE LITTLE SECOND LIEUTENANT TOOK TWO TREMBLING STEPS INTO THE TOMB. HE WAS STANDING CLOSE BESIDE THE MUMMY . . .
LISTEN TO THIS, BLACK . . . HERE LIES SINIS — THE PRIEST — WHO LUSTED AFTER POWER AND SHALL LIVE — SHALL LIVE FOREVER —
DIDN'T YOU HEAR WHAT I SAID, LIEUTENANT . . . THE ITALIANS ARE OUT THERE . . . YOU'VE GOT TO COME . . .

THREE MEN DIED ON THE ALTAR OF HIS AMBITION... THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT THIS SINIS CHAP... CEPHREN THE HIGH PRIEST WAS SHOT-SLAIN- WITH ARROWS...
THE ITALIANS... THEY'LL KILL US! WHY THE BLAZES DON'T YOU LISTEN...
BUT LIEUTENANT COTTRELL HARDLY HEARD THE SUDDEN HARSH NOTE IN THE VOICE OF NIGEL BLACK...


THE MUMMY LAY IN THE SHADOWS CLOSE TO BLACK'S SHOULDER BUT HE NEVER NOTICED IT. HIS EYES BLAZED SUDDENLY...
CURSE YOU THEN... I'LL MAKE YOU COME... I'M NOT GOING TO BE SHOT UP BECAUSE OF YOU...
I'LL COME WHEN I'M READY, BLACK... YOU'VE NEVER TALKED LIKE THIS BEFORE! WHAT'S GOT INTO YOU?

THE HANDS WHICH CRADLED THE TOMMY GUN WERE STEADY, THE EYES WERE DEADLY. THEY WERE THE HANDS AND EYES OF A CHANGED MAN . . .

IF YOU DON'T COME, LIEUTENANT, I'LL KILL YOU! YOU HEAR ME? I'LL KILL YOU!

SERGEANT VENN WAS CHECKING THE GULLIES BELOW THE LEDGE WHEN HE HEARD THE HARSH RATTLE FROM THE DIRECTION OF THE TOMB . . .

GUNFIRE! SOUNDS LIKE THE LIEUTENANT'S IN TROUBLE . . .

THE SERGEANT SCRAMBLED UP TO THE LEDGE, SHIFTING HIS PISTOL TO HIS HAND. HE CHECKED THERE. THE SLOPE ABOVE THE TOMB WAS ALIVE WITH RUNNING MEN.

EYTIES! BUT WHAT HAPPENED TO THAT SCARED LITTLE SUBALTERN?

THE SERGEANT HAD HIS ANSWER SECONDS LATER. A VICIOUS BURST OF AUTOMATIC FIRE FROM THE TOMB CUT DOWN TWO OF THE ITALIANS IN A BLOODY HEAP. IT WAS NIGEL BLACK BEHIND THE GUN . . .
MY OATH . . . MISTER BLACK . . .

THE THIN FINGER ON THE TRIGGER OF THE THOMPSON WAS COOL. THE VOICE WAS HUNGRY . . .
I'M WITH YOU, SIR!
KEEP BACK, SERGEANT . . . THIS IS MY SHOW . . . LET THE FOOLS COME!

NOW THE LITTLE SUBALTERN WAS A COLD AND DEADLY KILLER . . .

THE LAST THREE ITALIANS DROPPED THEIR RIFLES AND PUT THEIR HANDS UP. SERGEANT VENN MOVED TOWARDS THEM BUT A HARSH VOICE HALTED HIM . . .
WHERE ARE YOU GOING, SERGEANT ?
I WAS GOING TO DISARM THESE . . . . SIR. WE CAN TAKE THEM BACK WITH US TO G.H.Q.

WITH ONE LONG MURDEROUS BURST, SECOND LIEUTENANT NIGEL BLACK SHOT DOWN THE THREE UNARMED ITALIANS . . .
NOW IT'S ALL OVER, SERGEANT!
GOOD GRIEF!

SERGEANT VENN LOOKED AT THE YOUNG SUBALTERN IN HORROR. LIEUTENANT COTTRELL HAD ASKED THE SAME BAFFLED QUESTION . . .
WHAT'S GOT INTO YOU, MISTER BLACK?
WATCH YOUR TONGUE, SERGEANT! YOU'D BETTER TAKE A LOOK INSIDE THAT CAVE BACK THERE . . . THE LIEUTENANT IS DEAD.

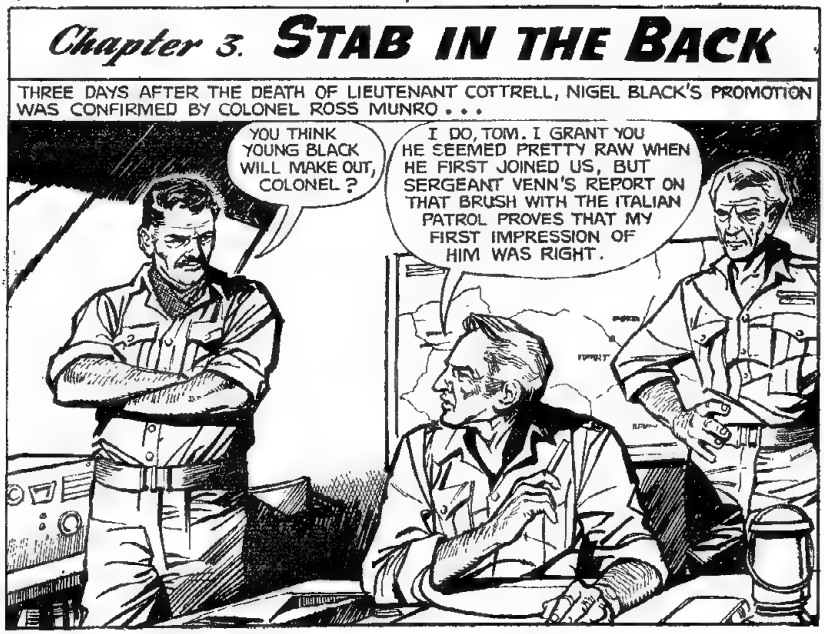
LIEUTENANT COTTRELL WAS SPRAWLED ON THE FLOOR OF THE TOMB. THERE WERE AT LEAST SIX BULLETS IN HIS BODY. SERGEANT VENN LOOKED UP GRIMLY AT THE JUNIOR OFFICER . . .
WHAT HAPPENED, SIR?
I SAW THE ITALIANS AND I RAN DOWN TO WARN THE LIEUTENANT. HE WOULDN'T LISTEN . . . THAT ITALIAN OFFICER OUT THERE FIRED A BURST THROUGH THE DOORWAY . . . THE LIEUTENANT WENT DOWN.

NIGEL BLACK'S VOICE WAS QUITE STEADY. SERGEANT VENN PICKED UP THE NOTEBOOK LYING BESIDE THE LIEUTENANT'S BODY. HE STOOD UP THOUGHTFULLY . . .
YES . . . THAT MUST HAVE BEEN THE FIRST GUN-BURST I HEARD. BUT SOMETHING MIGHTY QUEER HAS HAPPENED TO LITTLE BLACK.
ARE YOU COMING, SERGEANT?

AS HE CROSSED THE TOMB THEN, SERGEANT VENN'S EYES FELL ON THE LEDGE WHERE HE HAD SEEN THE MUMMY TEN MINUTES BEFORE. HIS JAW SAGGED...
NO... I DON'T BELIEVE IT... THAT MUMMY.

THERE WAS NO MUMMY NOW IN THE TOMB OF SINIS THE PRIEST, ONLY A HEAP OF EMPTY BANDAGES...
I SHALL BE TAKING OVER THE LIEUTENANT'S DUTIES FROM NOW ON, SERGEANT.

Chapter 3. STAB IN THE BACK



SERGEANT VENN HAD PUSHED THAT QUEER BUSINESS IN THE TOMB OUT OF HIS MIND. BUT, WHEN THEY MOVED FORWARD, HE WAS STILL UNEASILY WATCHING THE NEW LIEUTENANT . . .

WE'LL BE SKIRMISHING ON FOOT WHEN WE REACH THE FRONTIER, MEN. YOUR JOB IS TO KILL ITALIANS — AND DON'T FORGET IT!

HECK . . . WHEN I REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME HE WAS IN ACTION . . . THAT DAY THE MACCHI BOMBED US . . .

IF NIGEL BLACK HAD CHANGED, IT WAS FORTUNATE FOR HIM. THE TALL ELEPHANT GRASS OF THE ERITREAN BORDER COUNTRY IN 1941 WAS NO PLACE FOR A MAN WITH WEAK NERVES . . .

KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN, MEN . . .

YOU CAN'T SEE TWO YARDS IN THIS GRASS . . . WE MIGHT AS WELL BE BLIND!

THE MEN TRUDGED FORWARD IN THE HOT SILENCE, COARSE GRASS WHIPPING THEIR FACES, NERVES TAUT. THEY FELT THE SUDDEN HOT BLAST OF THE GUNS BEFORE THEY SAW THE ENEMY . . .

LIEUTENANT NIGEL BLACK WAS GIVING SHARP ORDERS AS HE GRABBED FOR THE BREN GUN. THERE WAS EVEN AN UNHOLY JOY IN HIS HIGH-PITCHED VOICE . . .

THE ITALIANS WERE STUMBLING FORWARD STRAIGHT INTO THE BREN'S CONE OF FIRE AS CAPTAIN GRAVES DROPPED DOWN BESIDE THE LIEUTENANT . . .
GOOD SHOW, BLACK . . . YOUR FLANKS ARE MOVING IN . . . NEED ANY HELP . . .
THE LIGHT IN NIGEL BLACK'S EYES WAS AS BRIGHT AS THE VICIOUS FLAME IN THE MUZZLE OF THE BREN GUN . . .
HELP FROM YOU, CAPTAIN? NO, THANKS. I CAN LOOK AFTER MYSELF . . .

IT WAS AN ADVANCED ENEMY PATROL AND THE BRITISH FLANKING MOVEMENT, BRINGING FIRE ON THE ITALIAN REAR, SOON DEMORALISED THE ENEMY . . .
CEASE FIRE, THERE . . . THEY'VE HAD ENOUGH . . .
FERMA!
FERMA!

NIGEL BLACK'S TEETH WERE CLENCHED, HIS MUSCLES RIGID . . .
BLACK . . . YOU HEARD THE SERGEANT . . .
KILL THEM, MEN . . . KILL THEM!
BLACK, THEY'RE YOUR OWN CHAPS OUT THERE . . . BLACK!

IT WAS TEN SECONDS BEFORE NIGEL BLACK RELAXED. HE WENT LIMP THEN. HE GOT UP DAZEDLY, RUBBING A HAND ACROSS HIS EYES . . .
WHAT THE BLAZES HAPPENED, SIR? DIDN'T THAT BREN GUNNER HEAR?
IT'S ALL RIGHT, SERGEANT . . . A MISUNDERSTANDING . . . ARE YOU OKAY, BLACK?
YES . . . I SUPPOSE SO . . . MY HEAD'S ACHING . . .

WHEN NIGEL BLACK'S SECTION WAS PULLED BACK TWO HOURS LATER, CAPTAIN GRAVES HAD A BRIEF WORD WITH THE SERGEANT...
KEEP AN EYE ON THE LIEUTENANT, VENN. HE LED THE MEN MAGNIFICENTLY TODAY, BUT I'D SAY HE WAS OVERDOING IT...
HE GETS CARRIED AWAY, SIR. I'LL DO MY BEST.

LATER, THE SERGEANT WALKED SOFTLY ACROSS TO NIGEL BLACK'S SLEEPING BAG. HE LOOKED DOWN AT THE NARROW FACE. IT SEEMED INNOCENT ENOUGH IN SLEEP...
BETTER ZIP UP HIS SLEEPING BAG... IT GETS DARNED COLD AT NIGHT OUT HERE...

LIEUTENANT NIGEL BLACK AWOKE SOME TIME AFTER MIDNIGHT. THE SLEEPING BAG WAS TIGHT ABOUT HIS ARMS AND LEGS. HE SCREAMED THEN, HIDEOUSLY.
NO...NO... MERCY...
WHEN THE MEN GOT TO HIM, THE LIEUTENANT WAS CLAWING IN PANIC FEAR AT THE SLEEPING BAG WHICH IMPRISONED HIS LIMBS...
WHAT THE BLAZES' WRONG WITH HIM?
IT MUST BE THE SLEEPING BAG, SIR... HE'S TRYING TO GET OUT OF IT...
NO...DON'T LEAVE ME LIKE THIS... NO... AAAAHH...

NIGEL BLACK QUIETENED DOWN WHEN THEY GOT HIM OUT OF THE SLEEPING BAG, BUT THE DREGS OF AN UNKNOWN HORROR WERE STILL IN HIS EYES . . .
I'M . . . I'M SORRY, SIR . . . I MUST HAVE HAD A NIGHTMARE . . . I'LL BE ALL RIGHT . . .
TAKE IT EASY, THEN, BLACK . . .

SERGEANT VENN COULD NOT SLEEP FOR THE REST OF THE NIGHT. HE KEPT REMEMBERING THAT TOMB — AND THE DEAD LIEUTENANT — AND THE MUMMY. NONE OF IT MADE ANY SENSE. IN THE MORNING . . .
WELL, SERGEANT ?
GET CRACKING, MEN . . . WE'VE GOT THIRTY MILES TO DO BEFORE NOON . . . CHECK YOUR GUNS . . .
LOOK AT HIM, CAPTAIN . . . NOTHING WRONG THERE NOW . . .

THE BRITISH DIVISION HAD PROBED DEEP INSIDE THE ERITREAN BORDER AND COLONEL MUNRO CALLED HIS OFFICERS TOGETHER. STRONG ITALIAN DEFENCES LAY AHEAD.
OUR OBJECTIVE IS THE FORT AT GALLABAT. THE GUNNERS HAVE BEEN SHELLING IT FOR TWO DAYS. OUR JOB IS TO PROBE THE DEFENCES...
WE SORT OF TOUCH THE EYTIES NERVE AND SEE IF IT JUMPS, EH, COLONEL?

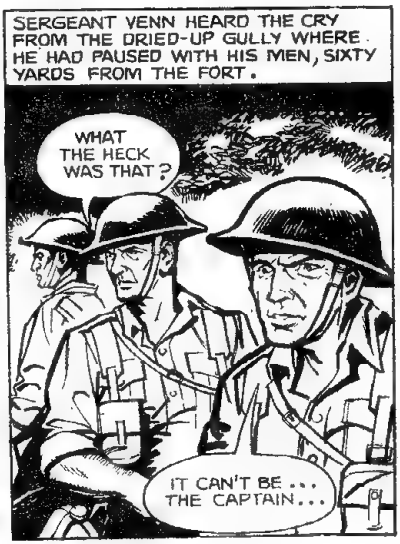
NEXT DAY, VULTURES ROSE HEAVILY FROM THE SHELL-PITTED DUST AROUND GALLABAT AS STEALTHY FEET IN THE ELEPHANT GRASS DISTURBED THEM...
AVANTI! THE BRITISH COME! FIX BAYONETS!

MUNRO'S SCOUTS HAD TOUCHED THE NERVE OF THE ITALIAN DEFENDERS -- AND IT JUMPED. THE ITALIAN TROOPS CAME POURING OUT IN FRENZIED DESPERATION FROM THE RUINED FORT . . .

LIEUTENANT NIGEL BLACK DID NOT TURN WITH THE OTHERS. HE STOOD FACING THE CHARGING ITALIANS — GUN BLAZING . . .

CAPTAIN GRAVES HEARD THE RATTLE OF THE THOMPSON BEHIND HIM AND RAN BACK. THE FACE THAT LIEUTENANT BLACK TURNED TOWARDS HIM THEN WAS VENOMOUS . . .
YOU HEARD MY ORDER, BLACK! GET BACK WITH THE OTHERS . . .
I'LL GET BACK WHEN I WANT TO . . . WHO ARE YOU TO ORDER ME ABOUT . . .

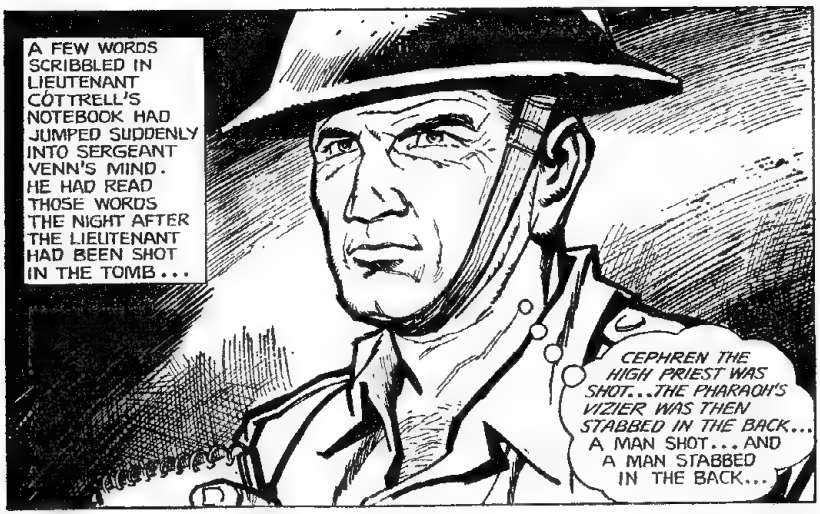
THERE WAS AN ITALIAN RIFLE AND BAYONET CLOSE TO NIGEL BLACK'S RIGHT FOOT. CAPTAIN GRAVES HAD TURNED HIS BACK ANGRILY . . .
I'LL SEE YOU WHEN WE GET BACK, LIEUTENANT . . .
CAPTAIN . . . YES . . . WHY NOT . . .


SERGEANT VENN HEARD THE CRY FROM THE DRIED-UP GULLY WHERE HE HAD PAUSED WITH HIS MEN, SIXTY YARDS FROM THE FORT.
WHAT THE HECK WAS THAT?
IT CAN'T BE . . . THE CAPTAIN . . .

THE SERGEANT RAN. HE MET LIEUTENANT NIGEL BLACK AMID THE ELEPHANT GRASS. THE YOUNG OFFICER'S FACE WAS COMPOSED . . .
DID YOU SEE THE CAPTAIN, MISTER BLACK? HE WENT BACK TO GET YOU...WE HEARD A SCREAM . . .
I HEARD IT TOO, SERGEANT... SOME EYTIE DYING HARD, I EXPECT. I DIDN'T SEE THE CAPTAIN...

CAPTAIN GRAVES WAS LYING ON HIS FACE AT THE EDGE OF THE GRASS. THERE WAS AN ITALIAN BAYONET IN HIS BACK . . .
KILLED— BY HEAVENS!

SERGEANT VENN HAD A SLOW MIND, BUT IT WORKED PATIENTLY. THERE WAS SOMETHING WRONG HERE. HE FELT IT IN HIS BONES . . .
BUT IF BLACK USED HIS TOMMY GUN ON THOSE EYTIES, AND THE CAPTAIN CAME UP TO HIM MINUTES AFTERWARDS, HOW THE DEVIL COULD THEY HAVE BAYONETED HIM? UNLESS . . . NO, THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE! BUT HE *WAS* STABBED . . .


A FEW WORDS SCRIBBLED IN LIEUTENANT COTTRELL'S NOTEBOOK HAD JUMPED SUDDENLY INTO SERGEANT VENN'S MIND. HE HAD READ THOSE WORDS THE NIGHT AFTER THE LIEUTENANT HAD BEEN SHOT IN THE TOMB . . .
CEPHREN THE HIGH PRIEST WAS SHOT . . . THE PHARAOH'S VIZIER WAS THEN STABBED IN THE BACK . . . A MAN SHOT . . . AND A MAN STABBED IN THE BACK . . .

Chapter 4. STRANGLED

GALLABAT WAS CAPTURED. THE BRITISH PRESSED ON TOWARDS THE FORMIDABLE MOUNTAIN STRONGHOLD OF KEREN IN CENTRAL ERITREA. IT WAS MUNRO'S SCOUTS WHO ASSAULTED SEBDARAT IN MID-FEBRUARY...

SERGEANT VENN HAD NO PROOF, ONLY A SMALL NOTEBOOK AND A MONSTROUS SUSPICION. BUT EVER SINCE THE DEATH OF CAPTAIN GRAVES, HE HAD STAYED CLOSE TO NIGEL BLACK.

IT WAS AT SEBDARAT THAT AN ITALIAN HAND GRENADE BURST CLOSE TO ACTING-CAPTAIN BLACK, WOUNDING HIM IN THE FACE WITH FLYING SPLINTERS OF ROCK ...

THE CREST WAS TAKEN AT THE POINT OF THE BAYONET. AFTERWARDS, SERGEANT VENN WALKED BACK TO THE FIELD HOSPITAL BESIDE NIGEL BLACK'S STRETCHER. THE WOUNDED MAN WAS UNCONSCIOUS ...

IN UNDER TWO MONTHS, IN A CRACK UNIT, NIGEL BLACK HAD CLIMBED FROM SECOND LIEUTENANT TO CAPTAIN . . .
REPLACEMENTS ARE HARD TO GET THESE DAYS, SETTERS. I THINK YOUNG BLACK WILL FIT GRAVES' SHOES VERY WELL. I'M CONFIRMING HIS CAPTAINCY AS FROM NOW...
SO BE IT, COLONEL... I'LL DO MY BEST TO GIVE THE YOUNGSTER A LEG-UP...

AS SERGEANT VENN FOLLOWED THE STRETCHER UNEASILY. HIS MIND WAS STILL GROPING FOR THE TRUTH . . .
...ACCORDING TO THAT INSCRIPTION THE LIEUTENANT TRANSLATED, MISTER BLACK'S GONE THE SAME WAY ABOUT PROMOTION AS THAT CHAP THEY BURIED IN THE TOMB... THE MUMMY... STEPPING INTO DEAD MEN'S SHOES...

THEY WERE BANDAGING NIGEL BLACK'S HEAD WHEN SERGEANT VENN REACHED THE OPERATING TENT. THE YOUNG OFFICER WAS STILL UNCONSCIOUS . . .
HOW IS HE?
JUST A SURFACE WOUND. HE'LL BE YELLING FOR BLOOD AGAIN IN A COUPLE OF WEEKS . . .

WHEN THEY WERE BINDING THE LAST BANDAGE AROUND THE NARROW HEAD, NIGEL BLACK CAME TO. THE EYES WHICH STARED OUT BETWEEN THE WRAPPINGS WERE FRANTIC . . .

WITH DEMONIAC FURY, BLACK SUDDENLY BEGAN TO CLAW AT THE BANDAGES COVERING HIS FACE . . .
TAKE HIS ARMS! I'LL GIVE HIM AN INJECTION.

THEY QUIETENED THE CAPTAIN WITH MORPHIA. SERGEANT VENN TURNED AWAY THEN, WHITE-FACED, SHAKEN . . .
THAT'S WHAT THEY DO TO A MUMMY . . . BANDAGE IT . . . AND IF THE MAN'S ALIVE WHEN THEY DO IT, LIKE THAT BLOKE IN THE TOMB WAS ACCORDING TO THE NOTEBOOK . . . I RECKON HE'D STRUGGLE LIKE MISTER BLACK DID . . .
ALL RIGHT, CAPTAIN . . . WE'LL TAPE YOUR FACE FOR YOU, IF YOU DON'T LIKE BANDAGES . . . EASY NOW . . . EASY . . .

THAT NIGHT, SERGEANT VENN PORED FOR THREE MORBID HOURS OVER THE NOTEBOOK . . .
HE GOES INTO THAT TOMB SCARED OUT OF HIS WITS . . . THE MUMMY'S IN THERE, . AND THE LIEUTENANT . . . WHEN I GO BACK THE LIEUTENANT'S SHOT DEAD, AND MISTER BLACK'S CHANGED INTO A KILLER . THERE'S JUST A HEAP OF WRAPPINGS WHERE THE MUMMY WAS . . . THOSE ARE THE FACTS, SO WHAT'S THE ANSWER ?

THERE WAS ONLY ONE ANSWER BUT IT WAS AN UTTERLY UNBELIEVABLE ONE. SERGEANT VENN GOT AS FAR AS COLONEL MUNRO'S TENT AND GAVE UP...

THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE KEREN ATTACK TOOK THREE HARD WEEKS. BY THE TIME THE UNIT MOVED FORWARD, CAPTAIN NIGEL BLACK WAS IN COMMAND AGAIN AND THE TOUGH SERGEANT VENN WAS ASHAMED OF HIS MORBID FANCIES...

FORT LODOC WAS THE PRIMARY OBJECTIVE OF MUNRO'S SCOUTS. IT WAS A CONCRETE DUGOUT SYSTEM BUILT INTO THE SUMMIT OF MOUNT SENCHIL. THEY CLIMBED TOWARDS IT ALONG KNIFE-EDGED RIDGES . . .

THE FORT WAS MANNED BY A COMPANY OF THE CRACK ALPINE REGIMENT. FIVE HUNDRED YARDS FROM THE SUMMIT, MAJOR SETTERS AND HIS MEN CAME UNDER HEAVY AUTOMATIC FIRE . . .
WE SHAN'T CARRY IT FROM HERE . . . THEY'VE GOT THE SLOPE TRAVERSED. GRAHAM, I'LL TAKE YOUR SECTION AND WORK AROUND FROM THE FLANK . . . YOU STAY HERE, CAPTAIN BLACK, AND DRAW THEIR FIRE . . .
BUT, MAJOR . . . OH, ALL RIGHT . . .

MAJOR SETTERS AND TEN MEN CRAWLED OFF TO THE RIGHT. NIGEL BLACK WATCHED THEM GO. HIS LIPS WERE TWITCHING. HE GOT UP SUDDENLY...
STAY HERE, SERGEANT... I'M GOING WITH THE MAJOR...
BUT, CAPTAIN... THE MAJOR SAID...

IN ONE MOMENT, LOOKING AT THAT NARROW VICIOUS FACE, ALL SERGEANT VENN'S WILD SUSPICIONS REVIVED...
I HEARD, SERGEANT... AND I'M NOT STAYING HERE WHILE THE MAJOR GRABS ALL THE GLORY! HOLD YOUR TONGUE AND STAY PUT...
HECK... I THOUGHT I WAS IMAGINING THINGS BACK THERE IN THE FIELD HOSPITAL BUT *SOMETHING* HAS GOT INTO HIM, THAT'S FOR SURE.

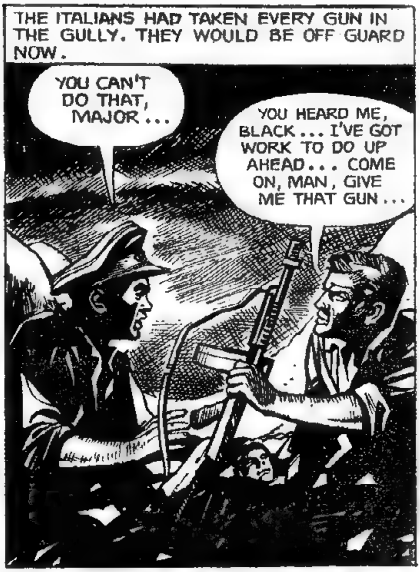
MAJOR SETTERS AND THE SECTION WERE ANGLING UP A ROCK-STREWN GULLY WHEN NIGEL BLACK CAUGHT UP WITH THEM. HE HELD BACK, CAT-FOOTED . . .
QUIETLY NOW, MEN... FIFTY YARDS TO GO...

THEN A ROCK SLIPPED UNDER A BRITISH BOOT. THE ITALIANS WERE ALERT. MACHINE-GUN BULLETS RAKED THE NARROW COFFIN OF THE GULLY . . .
BLAZES! TRAPPED...
AAAGH!
AVANTI!

CAPTAIN NIGEL BLACK FLATTENED HIMSELF BEHIND THE SLAB OF ROCK. THE MACHINE-GUN HAD CUT OFF. PROBABLY HE WAS THE ONLY MAN LEFT ALIVE IN THE GULLY. HE WAS GRINNING . . .
COME WITH ME, CAPORAL . . . WE WILL GET THEIR GUNS. THEY HAVE NO FURTHER NEED OF THEM NOW, SI?

THE ITALIAN OFFICER AND HIS MEN MOVED AMONG THE SPRAWLED ENGLISH SOLDIERS IN THE GULLY. THEY GAVE THEIR VICTIMS ONLY A BRIEF GLANCE . . .
PRESTO . . . PRESTO . . .

MAJOR SETTERS WAS ALIVE AND UNHURT. HE WAITED, STILL SHAMMING DEAD, UNTIL THE ITALIANS HAD GONE. WHEN HE DID RAISE HIMSELF CAUTIOUSLY, CAPTAIN NIGEL BLACK WAS CRAWLING PAST HIM...
MAJOR...
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, BLACK? NEVER MIND—HERE, GIVE ME YOUR GUN...


THE ITALIANS HAD TAKEN EVERY GUN IN THE GULLY. THEY WOULD BE OFF GUARD NOW.
YOU CAN'T DO THAT, MAJOR...
YOU HEARD ME, BLACK... I'VE GOT WORK TO DO UP AHEAD... COME ON, MAN, GIVE ME THAT GUN...

MAJOR SETTERS TURNED AWAY WITH THE GUN. HIS BACK WAS TO BARE-HANDED NIGEL BLACK...
STAY PUT HERE, BLACK... YOU CAN COME UP WHEN I'VE DONE THE JOB.
I COULD HAVE DONE IT MYSELF IF YOU'D DIED WITH THE OTHERS, MAJOR... IF YOU'D DIED...

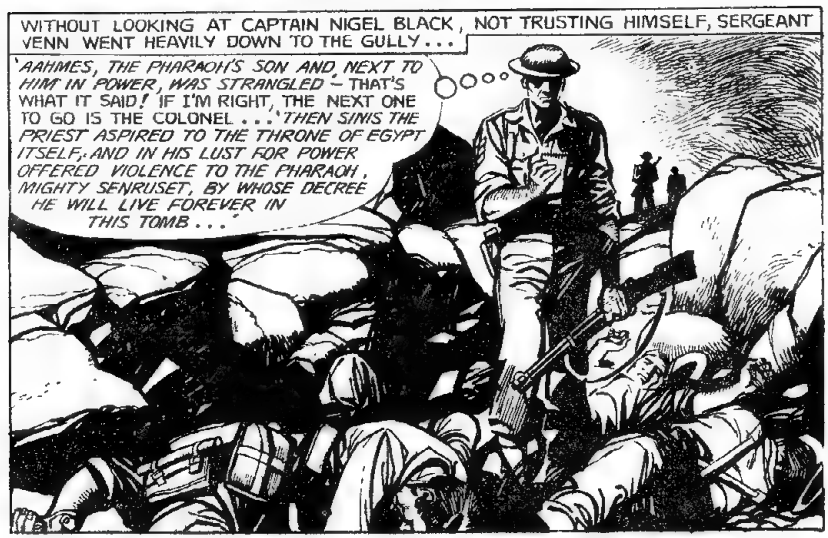
THE MEN WITH SERGEANT VENN ON THE OPEN SLOPE HEARD THE SUDDEN HARSH CLATTER OF THE THOMPSON FROM THE GULLY. THEY CHEERED. THE SERGEANT CHEERED WITH THEM . . .
HEAR THAT... THE MAJOR'S DONE IT.!
FORWARD, MEN... RUSH THEM.!

ALL UNEASY THOUGHTS WERE DRIVEN FROM SERGEANT VENN'S MIND AS HE SCRAMBLED TOWARDS THE FORT BEHIND HIS BLAZING GUN . . .

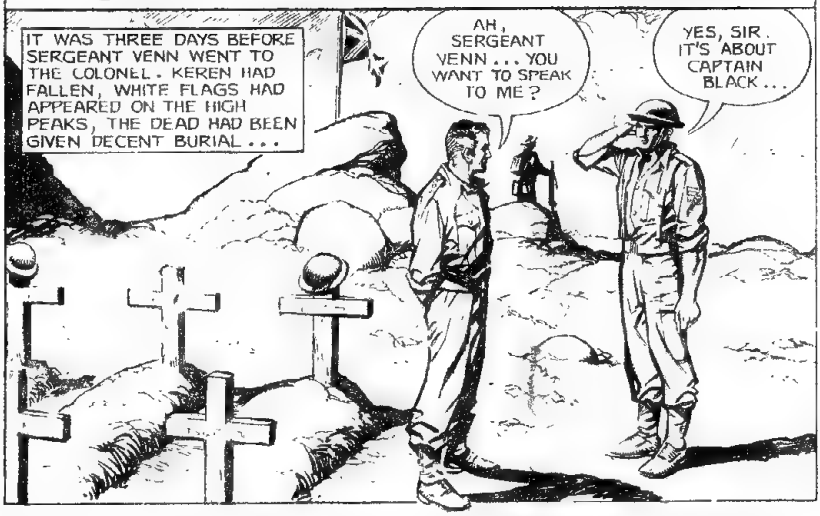
THE ITALIAN RESISTANCE WAS BITTER BUT BRIEF. THE DEFENDERS HAD BEEN SHAKEN BY THE SUDDEN ATTACK FROM THE DEATH-TRAP OF THE GULLY. BUT IT WAS NOT MAJOR SETTERS WHO HAD MADE THAT ATTACK...
CAPTAIN... YOU... WHERE'S THE MAJOR?
THEY CAUGHT HIM IN THE GULLY, SERGEANT ...AND GRAHAM AND THE REST OF THE SECTION. ALL KILLED!

A CORPORAL SLID DOWN THE GULLY TO INVESTIGATE. HE CAME BACK THREE MINUTES LATER, WHITE-FACED...
THE MURDERING SWINE! WE OUGHT TO SHOOT THE LOT OF THEM AGAINST A WALL...
HOLD ON, CORPORAL... THEIR JOB'S TO KILL, SAME AS OURS...

THE CORPORAL LOOKED AT SERGEANT VENN WITH SICK EYES...
YEAH, SARGE? BUT THE MAJOR'S BEEN STRANGLED...

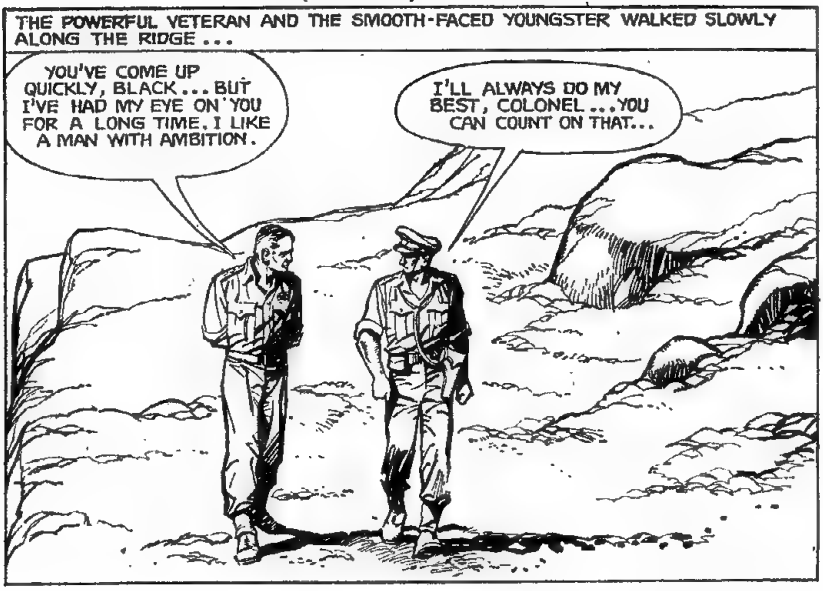

WITHOUT LOOKING AT CAPTAIN NIGEL BLACK, NOT TRUSTING HIMSELF, SERGEANT VENN WENT HEAVILY DOWN TO THE GULLY...
'AAHMES, THE PHARAOH'S SON AND NEXT TO HIM IN POWER, WAS STRANGLED - THAT'S WHAT IT SAID! IF I'M RIGHT, THE NEXT ONE TO GO IS THE COLONEL...' THEN SINIS THE PRIEST ASPIRED TO THE THRONE OF EGYPT ITSELF, AND IN HIS LUST FOR POWER OFFERED VIOLENCE TO THE PHARAOH. MIGHTY SENRUSET, BY WHOSE DECREE HE WILL LIVE FOREVER IN THIS TOMB...'

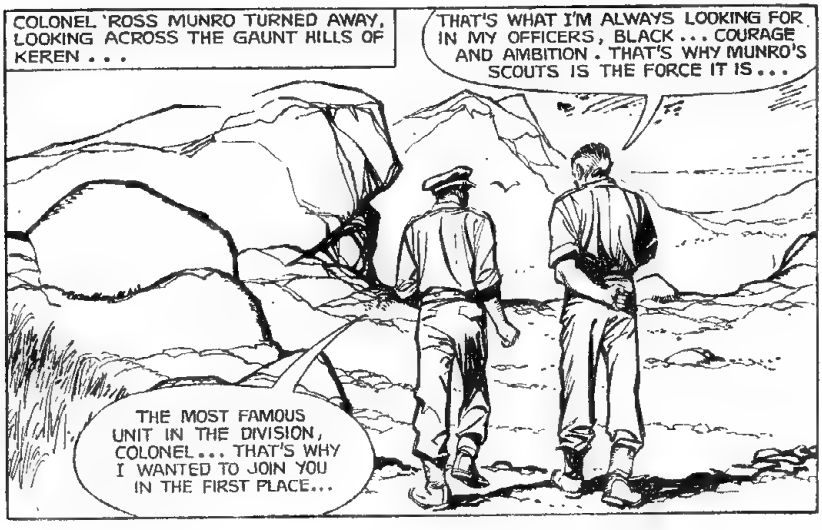
Chapter 5. LUST FOR POWER



COLONEL ROSS MUNRO TOOK A LONG HARSH BREATH. HE TURNED ON HIS HEEL . . .
VENN – I SUGGEST YOU GO BACK TO YOUR TENT . . . REST AWHILE . . . SEE ME IN A COUPLE OF HOURS' TIME. IF YOU'RE STILL TALKING DANGEROUS RUBBISH, I'LL HAVE YOU COURT-MARTIALLED OR STRAIT-JACKETED, ONE OR THE OTHER . . .

SERGEANT VENN WATCHED THE COLONEL GO. HE SAW NIGEL BLACK JOIN HIM. THERE WAS NOTHING HE COULD SAY NOW . . .
AH, BLACK . . . COME WITH ME, MY BOY. WE MUST GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER BETTER.
CERTAINLY, COLONEL . . .


THE POWERFUL VETERAN AND THE SMOOTH-FACED YOUNGSTER WALKED SLOWLY ALONG THE RIDGE ...
YOU'VE COME UP QUICKLY, BLACK... BUT I'VE HAD MY EYE ON YOU FOR A LONG TIME. I LIKE A MAN WITH AMBITION.
I'LL ALWAYS DO MY BEST, COLONEL... YOU CAN COUNT ON THAT...


COLONEL 'ROSS MUNRO TURNED AWAY, LOOKING ACROSS THE GAUNT HILLS OF KEREN ...
THAT'S WHAT I'M ALWAYS LOOKING FOR IN MY OFFICERS, BLACK... COURAGE AND AMBITION. THAT'S WHY MUNRO'S SCOUTS IS THE FORCE IT IS...
THE MOST FAMOUS UNIT IN THE DIVISION, COLONEL... THAT'S WHY I WANTED TO JOIN YOU IN THE FIRST PLACE...

THE COLONEL WAS STANDING ON THE EDGE OF THE SHEER CLIFF. HE HAD HIS BACK TO MAJOR NIGEL BLACK...
YES, YOU WERE AMBITIOUS EVEN THEN, BLACK...I SAW IT IN YOUR EYES. YOU WERE GREEN ENOUGH, BUT I SAW IT... AND I WASN'T WRONG...
NO, COLONEL... YOU WEREN'T WRONG...

THE SMOOTH VOICE WAS THICKER NOW. THE NARROW FACE TWITCHED...
I'M AMBITIOUS ALL RIGHT, COLONEL... BUT I HAVEN'T GOT TO THE TOP YET, HAVE I? THERE'S STILL ONE MAN IN MY WAY...

THE COLONEL STIFFENED. THE VOICE BEHIND HIM SCREAMED SUDDENLY. IT WAS A VOICE HE HAD NEVER HEARD BEFORE...
ONE MAN--YOU! I'VE WAITED LONG ENOUGH FOR POWER... WAITED AND KILLED...
THE DEVIL... BLACK...

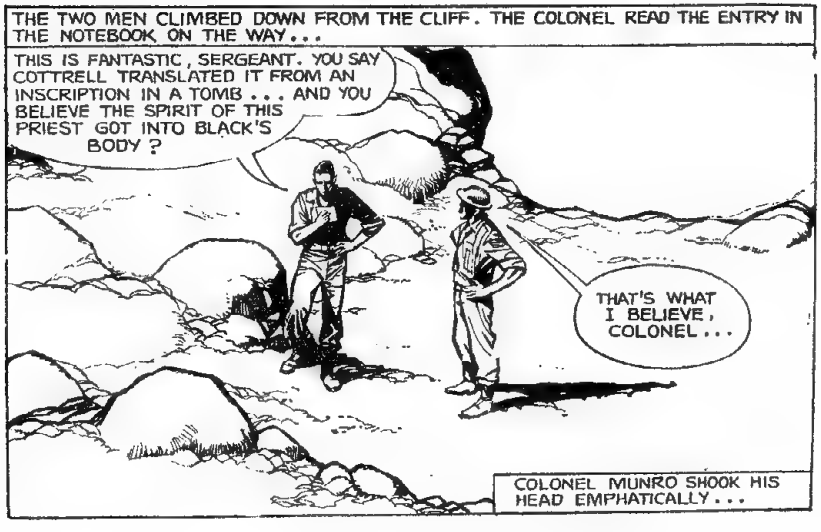
NIGEL BLACK LUNGED FORWARD WITH THRUSTING HANDS. IT WAS THE MOMENT SERGEANT VENN HAD BEEN WAITING FOR . . .

SERGEANT VENN'S SOLID TACKLE KNOCKED COLONEL MUNRO SPRAWLING FROM UNDER THE EVIL, THRUSTING HANDS OF NIGEL BLACK . . .

AND NIGEL BLACK THRUST AGAINST AIR. HE STAGGERED FOR A MOMENT ON THE EDGE OF THE CLIFF, PUSHED FORWARD BY HIS OWN MURDEROUS IMPETUS. HE SCREAMED HORRIBLY...
AAAA...

WHITE-FACED, THE COLONEL AND THE SERGEANT LISTENED TO THAT DESPAIRING, INHUMAN VOICE, UNTIL THE SHEER FACE OF THE CLIFF MUFFLED IT...
AIIIIEEEF...

THE TWO MEN STOOD FOR A LONG MOMENT IN THE WINDY SILENCE. THE COLONEL SPOKE AFTER A WHILE . . .
WELL . . . I DON'T NEED TO THANK YOU, SERGEANT, DO I? THAT VOICE . . . HE WAS A MAN POSSESSED.
YES, COLONEL, I THINK HE WAS EXACTLY THAT. I WANT TO SHOW YOU SOMETHING . . .


THE TWO MEN CLIMBED DOWN FROM THE CLIFF. THE COLONEL READ THE ENTRY IN THE NOTEBOOK ON THE WAY . . .
THIS IS FANTASTIC, SERGEANT. YOU SAY COTTRELL TRANSLATED IT FROM AN INSCRIPTION IN A TOMB . . . AND YOU BELIEVE THE SPIRIT OF THIS PRIEST GOT INTO BLACK'S BODY?
THAT'S WHAT I BELIEVE, COLONEL . . .
COLONEL MUNRO SHOOK HIS HEAD EMPHATICALLY . . .

I'M A PLAIN MAN, SERGEANT. I GRANT YOU IT'S A STAGGERING COINCIDENCE ... TWO KILLERS ... TWO LOTS OF SIMILAR DEATHS ... THAT TOMB LINKING THEM — BUT NO MORE THAN THAT.
AND THE MUMMY, COLONEL? I SAW IT THERE WITH MY OWN EYES WHEN I FIRST WENT INTO THE TOMB. LATER, IT WAS GONE EXCEPT FOR THE WRAPPINGS ...

THE COLONEL'S ROUGH VOICE WAS CONVINCING ...
YES, THE MUMMY. WELL ... IT HAD BEEN SEALED UP FOR A FEW THOUSAND YEARS. THE BOMBS UNSEALED THE TOMB ... THE BODY INSIDE THE WRAPPINGS WOULD JUST CRUMBLE AWAY TO DUST WHEN THE AIR GOT TO IT ...
YES ... THAT'S TRUE, COLONEL. BLACK'S HORROR OF THE SLEEPING BAG AND THE BANDAGES COULD HAVE BEEN JUST CLAUSTROPHOBIA ... A LOT OF PEOPLE SUFFER FROM THAT ...

THE TWO MEN STOOD LOOKING DOWN AT THE BROKEN BODY OF NIGEL BLACK. IT WAS SERGEANT VENN WHO SPOKE AT LAST . . .
POOR DEVIL . . .

THE COLONEL AND THE SERGEANT WALKED AWAY FROM THE BODY. THERE WAS NO UNEASINESS IN THEIR VOICES NOW. NIGEL BLACK WAS DEAD. THINGS WERE BACK TO NORMAL . . .
WE'D BETTER GET THE STRETCHER BEARERS, SERGEANT. I'LL REPORT THIS AS AN ACCIDENT.
YES, SIR . . . AND SIR, I'M GLAD YOU EXPLAINED THINGS FOR ME. A QUEER BUSINESS LIKE THAT COULD GET ON A MAN'S NERVES . . . BUT IT *MUST* HAVE BEEN JUST COINCIDENCE . . .

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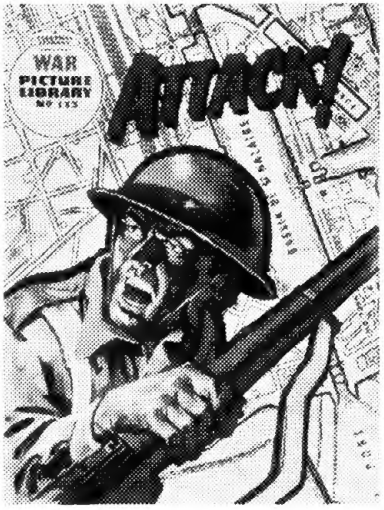

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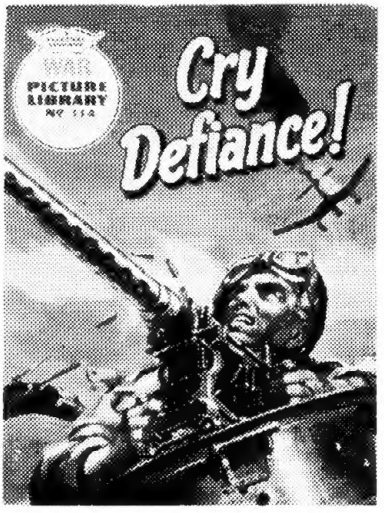

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